DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 218 SP 037 481

AUTHOR	Marsh, Susan Marie
TITLE	Using Portfolios To Promote Reflective Thinking: The UCF Experience.
PUB DATE	[97]
NOTE	9p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; Education Majors; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Portfolio Assessment; *Preservice Teacher Education; Student Evaluation; *Student Journals; *Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Educators; Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Preservice Teachers; *Reflective Thinking; University of Central Florida

ABSTRACT

This report describes a portfolio review process used as an admission requirement for preservice teaching internships at a college of education. The study began during the fall semester of 1994 and is continuing. Data sources include formal and informal interviews, surveys, documents, and field observations. The research shows that teaching portfolios are constructive instruments for instructional improvement and authentic assessment, and that they provide a substantive catalyst for faculty professional dialogue and development. Program development occurs as faculty and peer reviewers consider selective, evidence-based information from a variety of courses taken by the preservice teachers. Student gains include a head start in shaping a career based on continual improvement. As school districts implement portfolio assessment, it becomes more important for preservice teachers to have this exposure. Some students also use insights from the portfolio evaluation to decide that they are not ready for the internship experience or to make a change in career goals. Negative aspects include uneven faculty workloads and lack of inter-rater reliability. (JLS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 410 218

****

USING PORTFOLIOS TO PROMOTE REFLECTIVE THINKING: THE UCF EXPERIENCE

Susan Marie Marsh

University of Central Florida
College of Education
4710 Faust Court
Orlando, FL 32817

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. M. Marsh

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP037481

USING PORTFOLIOS TO PROMOTE REFLECTIVE THINKING: THE UCF EXPERIENCE

Susan Marie Marsh
University of Central Florida

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this southern university College of Education is to facilitate development of educators who demonstrate excellence through a continual, lifelong, reflective processes of learning. This goal is articulated in the College of Education Conceptual Framework developed by the Teacher Education Committee and affirmed by a majority of the faculty. Discussion about how to authentically assess this Framework resulted in the implementation a portfolio review procedure as an admission requirement for Internships I and II. This process posed not only logisitical problems, but as with most innovations, the expected debate, dissention, and disequilibrium of "learning something new". The purpose of this paper is to describe how this process was implemented, the factors that supported the innovation, and preliminary data concerning affects of this process. This research clearly reveals that teaching portfolios are constructive instruments for authentic assessment for students and provide a substantive catalyst for faculty professional dialogue and development.

Why Portfolios?

Members of the Teacher Education Committee are elected to represent all departments in the College of Education. The Dean urged this committee to document congruence between the Conceptual Framework and the College of Education programs. Traditionally, students applying for Internship I (two full days per week) and II (full-time, 12 week experience with a certified teacher) were required to complete an application form, document the required GPA, and write a brief autobiography. It was determined that portfolios offer a more effective way to examine both the breadth and depth of preservice teacher thinking and behavior prior to actual teaching in classrooms.

Professional Teaching Portfolio

Teaching Portfolio Guidelines

A Professional Teaching Portfolio Document was prepared by the Teacher Education Committee as a guide for students as they prepare their Professional Portfolios. Contents of the Portfolio must include a cover page, autobiography, resume, and nine sections containing evidences and reflections about each document chosen to be included. The sections selected for the Professional Portfolio were derived from the College of Education Conceptual Model. The sections include: Commitment; Collaboration; Communication Skills; Ethical Standards; Knowledge of Content ; Knowledge of Pedagogy; Reflective Practice; Diversity; and Technology. The Portfolio Guidelines provide suggestions for evidences, and examples of reflections.

All students applying for Internship I must submit a portfolio with all sections labeled and four completed sections including the Autobiography, Personal Resume, and a choice of two other sections. The purpose is to initiate students into the process of portfolio development and to assure that they will be able to complete all sections prior to application to Internship II. Application for Internship II must include a complete portfolio. Review of portfolios is accomplished by six- to ten-member committees composed of faculty, graduate assistants and public school personnel from Professional Development Sites. One day is set aside during Fall and Spring semesters for the process and each student is provided with a feedback form to reflect the comments of the committee.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

This study is an ongoing single case study of the implementation of portfolio assessment by a College of Education. Data collection methods are designed to illuminate the processes of implementation, as well as the understandings and perceptions of College of Education faculty. Data sources include formal and informal interviews, surveys, documents, and field observations. This study began in during the Fall semester of 1994 and continues as new data and insights are collected. Field studies methodologies involve

the overlap of data collection and analysis, therefore as themes emerge from the data, the researchers seek to clarify and develop further understandings.

FINDINGS

This research, as well as others', is clearly revealing that teaching portfolios are constructive instruments for instructional improvement and authentic assessment (Lomask, Pecheone & Baron, 1995; Wolf, 1996). Because they contain a broad repertoire of performances over time, portfolios can paint a rich, developmental view of teaching and learning.

Professional Development

This research has shown that portfolios foster professional development of university faculty because they effectively serve to make teaching a more self-conscious craft as well as a catalyst for substantive analysis of one's teaching philosophy, methods, and goals. The portfolio reviews by faculty structure collegial dialogue that serves as powerful motivators for common curriculular thinking. In some instances, faculty have more closely aligned their coursework with the Conceptual Model. For example, one faculty member commented,

> *I didn't even know what a portfolio was. Some students had asked me about it because they were being asked to assist with student portfolios where they were interns, but I didn't think you could do that in physical education. Then I started hearing about the C.O.E. professional portfolio and then I was on a review team for the first time. I realized how they are used and built, and now in my methods class, we work on one topic in the portfolio each week.*

During the review process, faculty members have consistently noted the weaknesses in student reflections and have been observed discussing the nature of reflection, as well as methods for fostering student reflection in their own courses. In an interview, a faculty member commented, *"I'm always revising my syllabus, but the review really brought home to me that students need help with self assessment and reflection".*

Program Development

Program development has been observed to occur as faculty and peer reviewers consider selective, evidence-based information from a wide variety of courses taken by preservice teachers. Prompted by legislative action mandating a reduction in the credit hours that can be required, the College of Education has embarked on a process of restructuring. The portfolio processes has served as a template for those discussions.

Student Development

Portfolio development by preservice teachers provides a head start in shaping a career based on continual improvement (Seldin, & Annis, 1992) . Some school districts are implementing portfolio assessment, and an administrator in a nearby county office stated, "*We would definitely be impressed with a teacher candidate who not only had developed their own portfolio, but who would bring it with them as an example for us to view*".

Students have reported a variety of responses. With a few exceptions, they take great pride in their portfolios. In addition, students report that they are more conscientious about organizing and saving materials and resources from their coursework, and that they are looking outside the College of Education for learning about teaching and learning. For example, they are seeking out professional organizations, professional conferences, and local workshops. Some students, however, have reported to faculty that when they reviewed the Portfolio Guidelines, they determined that they were not prepared for internship, and some cases changed their career goals.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the Conceptual Model provides a perspective and direction for the College of Education, it is clear that implementation of these concepts may not be effectively integrated within and between programs. Professional portfolio assessment has the potential to become a tool to rethink existing epistemology and to conceptually align programs.

While the implementation of the portfolio assessment process had provided evidence of student, faculty and program development, it is not free of the pitfalls and

potholes of the change process. The process has been in place only four semesters and this research is revealing that students sometimes receive 'mixed messages' and faculty are troubled by the unequal work load caused by nonparticipating faculty. Some worry about inconsistent reviews or 'inter-rater reliability'. The process requires risk-taking on the part of both students and faculty because both teaching and learning are laid open for review.

Pitfalls and Potholes

Commitment

Pascale (1990) states, "Change flourishes in a 'sandwich'. When there is consensus above, and pressure below, things happen" (p. 126). Vigorous administrative support played a decisive role in persuading faculty to invest time and energy to review portfolios. The Teacher Education Committee has taken nearly total responsibility for the organization and implementation of Portfolio Day Reviews and communications with students (workshops on portfolio development) and with faculty. It is difficult to determine the degree to which faculty feel ownership of the implementation of this process, but it is clear that faculty participation has fallen from 76% in Fall 1995 to 43% in Spring 1996. With the uneven distribution of the work load that has occurred, some faculty are becoming disillusioned with the process.

Communication

Portfolio guidelines for students have been provided to all faculty, and the process has been described and discussed at all faculty meetings. When approximately 33% of the faculty report that they are uninformed about the portfolio review process, it is apparent the there is a lack of a shared vision and understanding about the theory and practice of portfolio assessment, as well as about the benefits for faculty and students. Approximately 10% of the faculty surveys and 20% of student surveys indicate high concern about the inconsistency of the review process. In response to this concern, TEC created a 'reflection rubric' that was given to all students and faculty prior to the Spring 1996 Portfolio Review day. Further research may reveal the effectiveness of this effort.

Recommendations

1. Change must be viewed as a nonlinear process rather than a chain of cause and effects. "The goal then is to get into the habit of experiencing and thinking abut educational change processes as an overlapping series of dynamically complex phenomena. . . . the absence of problems is usually a sign that not much is being attempted" (Fullan, 1993, p. 21 & 26). It has been suggested that one way to involve faculty on an equitable basis would be to designate faculty reviewers each semester, on a revolving basis, and credit this as part of their academic load.

2. Continue the process of implementation while broadening the avenues of communication between and among faculty and students. Both faculty and students should be involved in revisions of the Portfolio Guidelines. Informational seminars for faculty and students concerning the guidelines and the review process should continue.

REFERENCES

Fullan, M.G.(1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform.* New York: Falmer.

Lomask, M; Pecheone, R & Baron, J. (1995) Assessing new science teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 53(6), 62-65.

Pascale, P. (1990) *Managing on the edge.* New York: Touchstone.

Seldin, P & Annis, L. (1991-92) The teaching portfolio. *Teaching excellence: Toward the best in the academy.* Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, Iowa State University, Ames, Vol. 3.

Wolf, K. (1996) Developing an effective teaching portfolio. *Educational Leadership*, 53,6, 34-37.